

AMERICAN INDIAN TRAILS

SUMMARY: Students hike the Bumpass Hell, Devils Kitchen, or other park trails and record field notes based on their experiences and impressions of that specific trail environment. Back in class they write a story, legend, or myth based on their notes.

GOAL: To increase student awareness and understanding of the American Indian culture and its rich kinship with the environment

OBJECTIVES: Students will (1) record at least ten field observations about a specific habitat, (2) develop and answer at least five questions based on their observations, and (3) write a story, legend, or myth based on their field trip experiences.

GRADE LEVEL: Third through Fifth

TIME REQUIRED: One to three hours onsite and one to two hours in the classroom

LOCATION: Devils Kitchen Trail (activity can be easily modified to use on other park trails)

MATERIALS: A pen or pencil, paper, and a writing surface (pieces of cardboard work well)

SUBJECTS: History/Social Science, Language Arts, Science

KEY WORDS: Story, Myth, Legend

BACKGROUND: The American Indians that live or lived in the area surrounding Lassen Volcanic National Park represent four tribal groups. The Maidu people lived to the south and east of the park. The Yana & Yahi people lived to the south and west of the park. The Atsugewi lived to the north and east of the park. Depending on the specific trail and site the students use, the Indian people may have walked, camped, hunted, or traveled in the area where the students will be walking.

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE: Tell the students that storytelling and legends have been an important part of the American Indian culture for centuries. These stories were woven from their everyday experiences and their close interdependence with the Earth. Explain that the students will be part of a tribe as they walk the trail. They will be Indians discovering their world. Divide the students into groups of four or five. Assign the groups the following habitats: water, forest, hydrothermal area and other highlights of the specific trail used. It is highly recommended that the teacher hike the trail before bringing up the students. Explain that while on the hike each student is to observe and take field notes on what he/she sees, hears, smells, and experiences in the assigned habitat. Students must stay on the trail while completing this assignment.

While visiting the habitat, each student is to develop and write down five questions about the habitat and things they observe on their walk. These questions will be answered back in class. These need to be open questions. A closed question has a short answer. An open question has a longer answer that requires more thinking and that may have more than one answer. Open questions often begin with how, what, or could, but not always. For instance, "what color is the most common flower in the meadow?" is a closed question. An open question is "what do you think causes the flowers in the meadow to grow where they grow?"

Explain that after the field trip the students will be required to write a story, legend, or myth based on their field notes. They will also have to answer their questions. Their questions and answers may be used in writing their stories. Make sure everyone is clear about the assignment.

At the trailhead, please review proper behavior and park rules. Establish a time limit for the hike and the activity. Have the class break up into their assigned groups and begin the hike. The groups will stop at their assigned habitats. The teacher may wish to spread the groups out along the trail. Stress the need for quiet and stillness in order to see wildlife.

Emphasize the need to stay on established trails and boardwalks and to follow all park rules. Back in class have the students answer their questions and then write a story, legend, or myth based on their experiences, observations, and questions. You may wish to have the students share their stories orally if time permits.

EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT: (1) Have the students draw a picture based on their story or experiences. (2) Have the students write a poem or song based on their story or their experiences on the trail.

ASSESSMENT: Student field notes, questions, stories, and presentations provide excellent samples for assessment. Simple questions about the park and the Maidu Indian culture could also be developed that provide for assessment for this activity.